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Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03055 110845Z

21
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
---------- 023803
O P 110820Z AUG 75
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4221
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY
AMCONSUL ASMARA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3055

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ET, SY
SUBJECT: CISCO II

REF: STATE 187058

1. UPI STRINGER OUSTWANI CONTACTED ACTING PAO HALL AUGUST 9 CONCERNING US HOSTAGES. OUSTWANI RECOUNTED FOLLOWING BASED ON HER CONVERSATIONS WITH FREE LANCE REPORTER HAMAD ABU ZAIDA, FORMER EMPLOYEE SYRIAN STATE TELEVISION.

2. ABU ZAIDA STATED HE HAD ACCOMPANIED JULY 14 ELF COMMANDO TEAM WHICH HAD CAPTURED US HOSTAGES AT 2300 LOCAL. AT THAT TIME SOME 250 COMMANDOES WERE IN POSITION AROUND ASMARA. KIDNAPPING TOOK PLACE ABOUT TWO KMS FROM KAGNEW WHEN TEAM INTERCEPTED VW WITH AMERICANS AND FOLLOWING ETHIOPIAN SECURITY VEHICLE. ABU ZAIDA STAYED WITH HOSTAGES ON SUBSEQUENT EIGHT DAY MARCH AND FURTHER TWO DAYS BY LAND ROVER TO COMMANDO BASE CAMP. HE REMAINED IN CAMP TWO MORE DAYS, MAKING JULY 26 LAST DATE WHEN HE HAD SEEN AMERICANS. DRUING TWO DAYS AT CAMP ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE HAD BOMBED IMMEDIATE VICINITY. ABU ZAIDA ARRIVED SYRIA AUGUST 8 AFTER LEAVING ERITREA VIA SUDAN.

3. ABU ZAIDA BROUGHT BACK WITH HIM CASSETTE, STILL CONFIDENTIAL

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PHOTOS AND FILM OF HIS INTERVIEWS WITH HOSTAGES WHICH HE

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IS NOW TRYING TO SELL TO VARIOUS NEWS AGENCIES. OUSTWANI SAYS SHE EXPECTED GET CASSETTE RECORDING AUGUST 11 BY 1800 HOURS LOCAL TIME. SHE WILL DELIVER CASSETTE TO APAO HALL SHORTLY THEREAFTER AND COPY WILL BE MADE. HALL SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED THAT AS OF EVEING AUGUST 10 OUSTWANI HAD NEITHER HEARD CASSETTE NOR SEEN PHOTOS/FILMS.

4. OUSTWANI HAD LITTLE FURTHER DETAIL AT PRESENT BEYOND AUB ZAIDA'S COMMENT THAT HE DOUBTS HOSTAGES WILL BE KILLED AT LEAST BEFORE PASSAGE OF SEVERAL MONTHS. ONE OF THE HOSTAGES TOLD ABU ZAIDA HE HAD SERVED IN VIETNAM AND THAT "HE HAD WORKED FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER."

5. ABU ZAIDA GAVE FOLLOWING REASONS FOR KIDNAPPING OF AMERICANS:

A. KAGNEW IS IMPORTANT LINK BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT.

B. KAGNEW OFFICIALS ISSUE ORDERS TO ETHIOPIAN MILITARY.

C. KAGNEW ABLE MONITOR CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN COMMANDO UNITS.

D. ELF TRYING STOP US ASSISTANCE TO ADDIS.

6. OUSTWANI OFFERED INTRODUCE APAO TO ABU ZAIDA AS FELLOW UPI EMPLOYEE. HALL PROPERLY REFUSED THIS OFFER BUT SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING MEET ABU ZAIDA AS EMBASSY OFFICER. OUSTWANI SAID SHE BELIEVES THIS WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO ABU ZAIDA WHO WOULD PROBABLY CONSIDER IT PREJUDICIAL TO HIS INTIMATE RELATIONS WITH THE ELF IN DAMASCUS AND ERITREA.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: IF WE IN FACT GET POSSESSION LATER TODAY OF CASSETTE, ADVISE DESIRED DISPOSITION.
MURPHY

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